

# Best Management Practices

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION



# Plains spotted skunk

*Spilogale putorius interrupta*

Common name • Plains spotted skunk

Scientific name • *Spilogale putorius interrupta*

State status • Endangered

## Information Contacts

For further information regarding regulations for development near prairies, contact:

Missouri Department of Conservation  
Policy Coordination Section  
P.O. Box 180  
2901 W. Truman Blvd  
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180  
Telephone: 573/751-4115

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Environmental Quality  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0176  
Telephone: 573/526-3315

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Regulatory Branch  
700 Federal Building  
Kansas City, MO 64106-2896  
Telephone: 816/983-3990

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Water, Wetlands, and Pesticides Division  
901 North 5th Street  
Kansas City, KS 66101  
Telephone: 913/551-7307

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Ecological Services Field Office  
608 E. Cherry Street, Room 200  
Columbia, MO 65201  
Telephone: 573/876-1911

## Ecology

Plains spotted skunks historically lived throughout the plains states of the United States from Minnesota south to Texas and from Missouri west to parts of Wyoming and Kansas. They have a smaller, more slender body than striped skunks. Plains spotted skunks typically can be identified by a white triangular patch on the forehead, a solid black tail and four to six broken white stripes extending from the neck along the back and sides. Spotted skunks are found most commonly in open grasslands, brushy areas and cultivated land. Their dens are located below ground in grassy banks, rocky crevices or along fence rows, as well as above ground in hay stacks, woodpiles, hollow logs or trees or brush heaps. Mating takes place in late winter, and the young are born from April to June. A litter usually contains five young. Plains spotted skunks are nocturnal and omnivorous in nature; they will eat insects, mice, rats, some birds and vegetables.

## Reasons for Decline

The plains spotted skunk was formerly common in western Missouri, but their populations began declining in the mid-1900s. The decrease may be related to the changes in agriculture that stressed clean farming, thereby leaving little cover for skunks to live in. It also is possible that increased pesticide use in agricultural areas has affected insect abundance, which skunks commonly eat.

## Specific Recommendations

Skunks contribute to the natural control of insects and rodents and should be considered an asset around farms.

- Limit the use of pesticides and herbicides.
- Avoid burning or clearing fence rows, brush piles and downed logs or trees where skunks may be present.
- Where skunks are unwanted, remove scrap lumber piles, hay stacks and unused farm machinery to eliminate potential skunk habitat.

## Disclaimer

These Best Management Practices were prepared by the Missouri Department of Conservation with assistance from other state agencies, contractors and others to provide guidance to those people who wish to voluntarily act to protect wildlife and habitat. Compliance with Best Management Practices is not required by the Missouri wildlife and forestry law nor by any regulation of the Missouri Conservation Commission. Other federal, state or local laws may affect construction practices.